

THE BLUE MOON

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A Vision for the Arts in Kentucky



The Arts Council Travels to New Territories to Develop a Long-range Plan

At the last quarterly board meeting of the Kentucky Arts Council, **Steve Kay** was introduced as the consultant who was going to help facilitate and design the process for developing the council's next long-range plan. Almost before he finished introducing himself, he posed a simple question to the board and staff. "Why are you doing a long-range plan?" The tone implied that he might be putting himself out of work; the answers established an engagement in the process.

The responses included finding out what Kentuckians are thinking about the arts, informing the work of the Arts Council, establishing measurement tools, and a path to find common ground with the goals of the Governor, the Cabinet, NEA, NASAA, SAF, etc. The process should also form stronger partnerships and new alliances. In addition, a new long-range plan needs to be developed because the old one will expire in 2003. It was also noted that the National Endowment for the Arts considers long-range planning as part of the competitive criteria in awarding the Partnership Agreement Grant, which is the Arts Council's largest source of federal funding. Moreover, it is an opportunity to meet the Arts Council's mission and find Kentuckians' vision of the arts for the future.

As the Arts Council moves forward with designing the process for developing a long-range plan, many factors come in to play and many players become participants in making certain that it is the "people of Kentucky" that own the plan. Design team meetings have folded in the behavioral model from the Rand research on increasing participation and the **integrative approach** that is evolving from the Arts Council's work with the Wallace Reader's Digest Funds' START initiative.

Steps to Increase Participation Using the Integrative Approach

1. Link participation-building activities to core values and purpose by choosing participation goals that support that purpose.
2. Identify clear target groups and base tactics on good information about those groups.
3. Understand the internal and external resources that can be committed to building participation.
4. Establish a process for feedback and self-assessment.

In addition to incorporating the integrative approach, the planning team is also applying the standards based assessment process for organizations that is being developed with the help of the [Collaborative for Teaching and Learning](#). This process constantly asks the Arts Council two questions in order to have a continuous system of evaluation. 1. *What do we need to know to meet our goals?* and 2. *What do we need to do to meet our goals?* This assessment process allows for the flexibility to change strategies in mid-stream if the goals are not being met.

Kentucky Citizens for the Arts and Arts Kentucky also have representation on the design team as well as circuit riders, staff and board members of the Arts Council.

Who has already looked at the role of the arts in Kentucky?

The team has reviewed the impact of various planning documents and data that will inform the vision for the arts in Kentucky's future and the role the Arts Council has in realizing those visions. Among the external documents noted was the Kentucky Long-Term Policy Research Center's "[Visioning Kentucky's Future](#)". According to this research, Kentuckians feel the Commonwealth is making its greatest progress (out of 26 goals) towards "**GOAL 12 –Kentuckians will have opportunities to appreciate, participate in and contribute to the arts and humanities and historic preservation.**" At the same time, when asked which goal is most important the "arts opportunities" goal fell to last place. The four goals that ranked highest were "safe and caring communities," "responsibility for family success," "accessible quality health care," and "excellent system of lifelong learning."

The team has also taken under consideration other external documents such as the [Strategic Plan of the Education, Arts and Humanities Cabinet](#), the Policy Governance of the Arts Council, the [Kentucky Strategic Plan for Economic Development](#), The Cultural Heritage Tourism Master Plan, and the [Kentucky Board of Education's Strategic Plan](#). Internal documents that are being considered in the planning process are the current long-range plan of the Arts Council and the Kentucky Craft Marketing Program (KCMP), the Product Development initiative of the KCMP, the mission, goals and strategies of the Kentucky Folklife Program, as well as the START initiative work in building participation.

What are the performance expectations of the new long-range plan?

The process and the plan itself should lead to a vision for the future of the arts in Kentucky. The process being developed is intended to be larger in focus than just the Arts Council's programs and services. This will require broader and more diverse public input than artists and constituent arts organizations. Likewise, the ownership of the vision and the implementation of the plan will belong to those that participate in the process. Other desired outcomes include an increase in participation in the arts, a broader definition of the arts, and a collection of thought about the role of the arts in the four issues most important to Kentuckians as reflected in "Visioning Kentucky's Future."

The plan will also build on the current long-range plan, which is currently

a working document for the Arts Council. The strategies and the work of the council will change as informed by the process, but the five “ends statements” and the mission are likely to remain the same. The board developed the ends statements and the mission as it formed its new governance policy. Ends statements are final accomplishments, closely akin to goals but not exactly the same. An easy way to understand ends statements is “our goals are met when...”

The Kentucky Arts Council's goals are met when...

1. There is efficient statewide delivery of arts programs and services.
2. Public policy is favorable to the arts.
3. Education in the arts is provided.
4. Artists live and work in a supportive environment.
5. The role of the arts in society is valued as basic to life.

Are we talking public input or just another round of arts folks lobbying for more programs and services?

Following the **integrative approach**, the Arts Council has set a priority for listening to people from different **target groups**. Across the Commonwealth local planning committees in partnership with Arts Council Circuit Riders and staff will plan events that are more than just public meetings, to reach people that may have never considered how the arts affect their lives. This conscientious attempt to **diversify** the attendance will involve changing people's perception of the arts from the outset. The events will also attempt to **broaden** the participation by removing some of the practical barriers to attending arts events and public meetings that face those that are already **inclined** to participate. Look for these events in your area of the state during October and November.

Public input will also come from those that have already established themselves as stakeholders in the arts. As such, they are considered as **participants** to form “interest circles” that will have in-depth dialogue with the Arts Council to help create a vision for the arts in Kentucky. Those interest circles could be made up of **stewards** (boards and staff of arts organizations, elected officials, educators, etc.), **creators** (individual artists, community-based artists, producers, presenters) and **audiences**. It is anticipated that the interest circle dialogues will serve to **deepen** the commitment to build participation in the arts in Kentucky.

So then, what?

Once all the data (information and feelings that people have shared) has been gathered, it will be organized in a fashion that can be analyzed and synthesized into a long-range plan for the future of the arts in Kentucky. The plan will also have evaluation mechanisms (or performance indicators) that will inform the owners of the plan as to how much progress is being made towards the common vision. This part of the process will take a number of revisions and checks to ensure that it is a living document, one that doesn't sit on a shelf and one that actually accomplishes something for the citizens of Kentucky. And by the way, if you were able to read this article from start to finish, you have just been led through the **integrative approach** for building participation.
